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DENTAL EDUCATION

AND

DR. TRENOR.

By L. S. BURRIDGE, M. D., D. D. S.

BOND STREET, NEW YORK.

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APRIL, 1852.

DENTAL EDUCATION AND DR. TRENOR.

By L. S. BURRIDGE, M. D., D. D. S.,

NEW YORK.

I was never more forcibly impressed with the sublime sentiment which should govern every mind—"say not I will do so to him, as he has done to me ; I will render to the man according to his work," than while reading an article in the New York Journal of Medicine, by John Trenor, M. D. Dentist.

Had Dr. Trenor ever read this proverb, and been governed by it, he never would have written such an article. Had he been influenced by the feelings which should distinguish every man of high professional attainments, his address would have been warmly greeted, and his efforts honored by every lover of professional excellence, whether his views had or had not corresponded with each one's former opinions—for then all would have respected the manner, if they could not exactly have coincided with, or approved of the matter. But when we perceive aught of arrogance and prejudice mingled with subjects of great importance, it is prudent to pause and consider, whether or not the views advanced which appear to possess so much interest in their respective objects, are really the results of assiduous study, and years of well earned experience, arranged and promulgated with candor and sound judgment.

Feeling as all must do, the wants of the profession, and the just right the members of it have to suggest improvements, I shall not take upon myself the responsible office of condensing any method which has been hitherto adopted or recommended by the experience or sagacity of any one who would improve the standard of Professional qualifications, fearing that all would fall short instead of becoming too wise, should they even adopt and pursue the course recommended by Dr. Trenor.

It is not the wisdom of one man which has given to the world all the arts and Sciences, but mind added to mind, thought to thought, effort to effort, all combining to make one great and perfect whole, which may not be completed for ages and ages to come ; nor can any of the separate parts of the great systems of truth, be learned much less improved by any one mind that will not patiently study the methods which are best suited to unfold its resources. It is not my intention to treat the Doctor's remarks with disrespect, but I cannot refrain from saying that he has either wilfully or ignorantly imputed to Dental Colleges a grossly unjust character, and as the latter view is the most charitable, it is hoped that he will, on some future occasion, make a mantle of it to cover his mistaken opinions and uncalled for judgment.

Dr. T. has done great wrong to institutions which have laid the foundation of much good, and given fair promise of doing much more; institutions in which lies our greatest hope of having the profession thoroughly instructed and effectually benefitted. Did I not, as a Graduate of the Baltimore College, feel most keenly the rank injustice of Dr. T. in assuming the position of dictator as to what is right and what is wrong in an institution which he never entered, and of which he knows nothing, I should have passed over his remarks in silence.

It is a truth familiar to all, that among the professions which claim the confidence and support of a civilized people, there is not one in which there is so much deception and

quackery, as the Medical—and the Dental part of it stands pre-eminent for such abuses.

A profession which in its specialities and dependences should stand the highest and be the freest from all influences, save the purest and the noblest which actuate man. For it has to deal with life and death, to preserve the one, to ward off as far as may be the other. To treat man's highly organized structure is not a work adapted to clumsy hands and faulty heads, for when their power fails, disease and death must rule.

How humiliating then is the reflection to the honest and ambitious seeker after truth, while he labors day by day to obtain the information, and to exercise the skill which long experience has proved to be most successful, to see those on every side pursuing the same calling, but governed by no higher motives than sordid or selfish purposes, and rejecting all the means that would enable them to become useful. Far different it is with the one who has obtained all the information in his power which can in any way add to usefulness, and feels every day the want of more skill and higher degrees of knowledge, as more and more complicated cases present themselves, and after all, feels there is much left undone, and much done which ought to have been done better. Such convictions have stimulated a few noble minds, who have not only suggested improvements, but have vigorously gone to work regardless of time and expense, to institute facilities for gaining knowledge, and to advance and improve the condition of professional responsibility.

To fulfil the duties that daily devolve upon the Dental practitioner, talents of the highest order are brought into requisition.

It is not true as was once supposed, that the profession is of little importance, and its accumulated knowledge so limited that it can be soon mastered; that but little more is needed than to see a few operations, procure a few instruments, a door-plate or sign, and to give notice of location, &c.

The requirements of the profession embrace a wide field, and the educated Dentist is not now expected to confine himself to a few manual or surgical operations on the teeth, but his legitimate province properly extends over some of the most important organs of the human frame. The mouth with its diversified apparatus, tongue, salivary glands and ducts, tonsils, gums, teeth, maxilla, palate bones, &c. &c. ; with deformity and disease of the face, neck, nasal cavities, antrum, &c. &c. come directly under his care. The great variety of complicated maladies which affect these various structures, both local and constitutional, are of such a character that the remedial agents are neither few nor simple, which must be employed to treat them as science directs, and honesty approves ; they demand the full exercise of the educated and skilful Dentist. Although manual or mechanical dexterity is highly essential and all important, still it does not enable one to detect disease without knowing the normal structure and function of the diseased part or organ ; this requires a knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology. To detect disease from signs and symptoms and form a proper diagnosis, demands an acquaintance with Pathology, and to mitigate and arrest disease when detected, requires a knowledge of Chemistry, Therapeutics and Materia Medica ; and to supply the deficiencies which disease or accident produces, affecting health, beauty and comfort, demands nice mechanical skill in the arrangement and adaptation of the required appliances.

Diseases of a malignant as well as those of a benign character, are as frequently developed in the organs entrusted to the Dentist's care, as in any other part of the body.

Inflammatory affections of every stage, Osseous, Fungous and Scirrhus Tumors, Ulcers, Abscesses, Caries and Necrosis, Accidental and Congenital Deformity of every grade, depend upon causes which should be familiar to the Dentist ; and he who would honor his profession and benefit the public, will not enter upon practice without such qualification as will enable him to treat successfully, all the diseases which are known

to affect the organs which come immediately within his province.

These branches of science so earnestly and justly recommended by able men, are taught in the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. Where, except in such institutions, can the proper qualifications of the Dentist be obtained? I answer most emphatically, no where in so complete and useful a manner. Believing as I do, that all who are familiar with the rules and regulations of such schools, and the principles by which they are governed, will agree with me; those who choose to controvert the assertion, must bring forward stronger arguments than the following language of Dr. Trenor contains:

“They “(Dental Schools,)” come before the public with such confident promises and plausible pretensions, and as at present constituted are so decidedly inefficient, that they are a greater draw-back to improvement, than if they had never existed.”

“They profess to remedy an evil which they most effectually and glaringly magnify. They hold out the idea of giving a complete and finished course of instruction in Dentistry, while full two-thirds of what should be taught, and that the most important too, viz: all the instruction which every Medical School inculcates in Medicine and Surgery, it does not enter into their arrangements nor do they possess the ability with any degree of usefulness or benefit to perform.”

If Dr. Trenor has been as industriously employed in obtaining information on all points, as he would have us believe he has been in ascertaining the true character of Dental Schools, a class of Medical Students to whom he would impart his knowledge with the same zeal he has displayed in denouncing that of which he is profoundly ignorant, would really come forth “learned in wisdom’s ways.”

Those who have passed through the full period required by the charter of the Baltimore College in the mechanical and higher branches of professional study, and who are

somewhat acquainted with the professional practice of Dr. T., feel no hesitation in affirming, that they never saw a Student graduate from that institution, after devoting himself to the prescribed studies, who could not perform with equal beauty, permanence and finish, any and every operation in Surgical and Mechanical Dentistry, as Dr. Trenor can, even now, with all the advantages of his first private and public instructions, with full thirty years of practical experience thereunto superadded. He has therefore done great injustice to Students who could not have graduated from that institution if they had not been his equal in Mechanical and practical skill, and has shown insult and disrespect to Professors, who judging from his published article, are greatly his superior in classical, intellectual and professional attainments.

When we say that Dental Schools as they are now "*constituted*," are able to qualify Dentists, we mean they teach such principles as it is indispensable for every Dentist to possess, and what is no where else as thoroughly taught ; not that every one who graduates at them is by any means an accomplished and skilful Dentist, any more than every one who graduates from Medical Schools is an accomplished Physician and skilful Surgeon ; nor would I in every instance, set up graduates as models for imitation. But that the deficiency or want of "*ability*" lies not in the faculty, I will endeavor to show, and will only speak of the Baltimore Dental College, not because it possesses superior advantages over others having similar talent and the same end in view, but because I *know* that institution, and desire to confine my remarks to matters with which I am personally acquainted ; should I do otherwise, I should fall into the same error as those who write for the sake of writing.

The Baltimore Dental College received its charter from the Legislature of Maryland, more than twelve years ago, since which time, it has been gradually increasing in favor and prosperity. If two years of study and a rigid examination conducted by its Professors, and a committee chosen yearly,

composed of three Dentists and two Medical practitioners, independent of its Faculty, have in any way injured its alumni, then we will admit it has been a great "*draw-back to improvement.*"

And if its Faculty consisting of five teachers, four of whom are medically educated, labor five months in the year to remedy an evil which they "*glaringly magnify,*" it is certainly to be hoped that Dr. Trenor did not graduate at a school from which any of these received their professional honors.

A practical knowledge of Anatomy, which is admitted by all to be a foundation of medical science, is as fully taught in the dental as in almost any medical school in the country. Those who have had the privilege of dissecting, under Professor Handy's care, and hearing his instructive and lucid lectures, as he passed from organ to organ, demonstrating its relation, structure and function, will remember him as an able teacher, devoted to the cause which has so long occupied his laborious attention. He is also a teacher of Physiology and Surgical Anatomy, and performs in the presence of his class, every operation (on the teeth excepted,) which properly belongs to dentistry. Nor are other medical branches taught in a manner deserving less credit, as all will cheerfully testify who know Professor Bond's classical attainments, his sound judgment as a Physician, his ability as a teacher, and his noble qualities as a gentleman and a citizen. It is his province to teach special Pathology, Therapeutics, and Materia Medica. These branches, it is true, are not as fully taught as in medical colleges, but they receive as much attention as experience in the dental profession seems ordinarily to demand.

Does this look like *inability* to teach *any* truths inculcated in medical schools?

What does Dr. Trenor mean by "all instructions," &c., and other assertions which have no foundation in fact?

If medical and surgical knowledge constitute "two-thirds" of a Dentist's out-fit, let us see if the other third is taught in a manner worthy the Doctor's approbation.

The principles and practice of Dental Surgery, are thoroughly taught by Professor Harris, to whom the profession and the world, are more largely indebted for the present state of dental literature, than to any other man. Operative and mechanical dentistry receive Professor Cone's close and laborious attention, on an average of from two to three and a half hours a day, divided between the infirmary and lecture rooms, imparting a practical knowledge of the art, which cannot be as thoroughly obtained in any private office. Added to this there is a laboratory which receives the attention of the demonstrator two or three hours a day.

We have then a faculty consisting of two medical practitioners, and three practitioners of dentistry who stand as high in their respective professions as any in the same calling in the city of Baltimore, or even in the city of New York—the residence of the calumniator of Dental Colleges. There need be no fear entertained for an institution supported by such men, honored and respected, as it is by its alumni, who will, individually and collectively, use every effort to sustain, not only that institution, but others deserving the same credit.

The largest portion of respectable dentists, and many distinguished physicians, in this and other countries, already acknowledge the superiority of Dental Colleges over all other methods which have been hitherto adopted or suggested, for teaching dentistry.

Among some fifty or more students whom I have known personally, many of whom were “medically educated,” and many, too, who had enjoyed, before their attendance at college, the very best opportunities afforded by private instructions, there has been a universal feeling of satisfaction. All have declared their high appreciations and grateful acknowledgment of the advantages which they believed could only be procured in that institution. Such facts speak in favor of dental schools, more loudly than can the most confident objection of those prejudiced against them.

Who would not in crossing a dangerous channel, rather embark with an experienced helmsman, who had become familiar with the rocks and shoals, than go with one who himself had never been but half way across? So one who has adopted every method of obtaining dental instruction, may know the relative value of each. When we hear complaints against dental schools from one who has had private and public medical instruction, combined with a thorough dental education, obtained at a well organized dental school, there will then be good reasons for investigating the cause of his complaint. But when we hear an almost universal response from such men, that dental schools, are indispensable; that highly as they may appreciate a sound medical education, and the advantages derived from private instruction, they feel it to be their duty to recommend all who desire to be well instructed dentists, to avail themselves of the advantages of dental schools; we may well listen incredulously to mere theorizers upon the subject.

If the profession were composed exclusively of those, who were classically and medically educated to the extent of an acquaintance with the most abstruse sciences, then should we no longer have a method which has given to the public prematurely, more than three-fourths of all who ever called themselves dentists. A student would not be able to find a preceptor ready to impart to him the *whole knowledge* of the dental art, in the period of three weeks, three months, nor three years, for a sum of \$10, \$100 or \$1000.

Amalgamist—plasterers and tinkers, could then, no longer impose upon suffering humanity.

But it cannot be expected that the two great reforms in dentistry can speedily accomplish so desirable an end, for they, like every effort designed for the greatest good, must encounter opposition, and overcome prejudice.

The "American Society of Dental Surgeons," has for its objects union and harmony among its members, who aim to diffuse general information, and to free the profession from the

narrow minded selfishness which has so long benumbed it. And if dental schools overcome the great evil for the remedy of which they were established, then will a mighty work indeed have been performed, and the most sanguine hope of their founders be realized.

Be it remembered, however, that Dr. Trenor has never taken any part in favor of either, nor am I aware that he has ever done any thing to improve in the slightest degree, the practice of dental surgery.

The only papers which I have known or even heard of his writing, are one to recommend amalgam as a filling for teeth ; the other to condemn Dental Schools. The first shows a total want of correct knowledge in professional practice, the other total ignorance of the advantages connected with the thorough teaching in dental colleges. Therefore, instead of advancing the interests of the profession, he has most "*glaringly magnified*" the evils that before existed.

But if the common method should prevail for a season, and even the improvement upon it suggested by Dr. Trenor, be superadded, it will only afford another proof in the history of the world, that the best systems of instruction are not always received and adopted. Nevertheless, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again—The eternal years of God are her's."

If we judge correctly, it will be impossible for any plan to succeed to the injury of dental institutions, which is so much inferior in many respects to them, as the one which leaves the whole practical part of dentistry to be taught by private dentists. Perhaps more than one-half of the whole number are incapable of teaching it, had they every facility in their power for so doing ; and it must be remembered that this large, but weak portion of the profession would undertake to teach more than three-fourths of all the students, for the very reason that they would continue to hold out greater inducements for a less fee. Nor has experience proved that the best operators possess either time or facility for teaching practical den-

tisty as it should be, or as it is taught in Dental schools where infirmaries and laboratories are supplied with clinical cases.

Has Dr. Trenor in his thirty years practice instructed *one* able Dentist?

We are here reminded of a truthful remark made by one of the ablest practitioners in the profession, while (two years ago,) attending the commencement at the Dental College, he said to a student after hearing his examination, and inspecting some operations on the natural teeth, and mechanical specimens—"you have obtained more information and practical skill in two years, than I learned in ten, with ten times the cost and pains that you have incurred." And we believe his feeling would be echoed by every member of the profession, if they would as he did, come forward with an honest heart, having but one desire, and that to know the truth and impart it to others.

There seems to be many objections to the plan suggested by Dr. T. First, The impracticability of establishing Dental Professorships in Medical Schools, or should they be established the little security the public would have as to the attainments of Dentists, only theoretically educated—on the other hand there is but one point which can be argued in favor of such a course, and that is, a more thorough medical education; and it is by no means doubtful, whether the utility of a more complete medical education than is inculcated in Dental Schools, would compensate for the least objection that can be urged against it, (the plan suggested by Dr. Trenor, or rather by Dr. Gardette, and advocated by him.)

In conclusion, I will state that there are some things which Dr. Trenor may deem essential to success and with which he *may* be familiar, which are not taught in Dental Colleges.

They do not teach that a tooth has an "*internal pulp*;" that disease ever moves in any given "*ratio*;" that teeth are more "*frequently imperfectly formed*;" that acids and preparations of mercury are the only agents employed in disease which can in any way affect the teeth; that "*most profess-*

sional men" believe that the remedies prescribed in the treatment of disease are mainly the cause of defective teeth in impaired constitutions ; that "mild" derangements of the mucous membrane and soft parts of the mouth, must necessarily "*materially and injuriously*" affect the teeth; that "*the practice of "severe salivation"* is "*entirely abandoned*;" that there are "*fits of sneezing*;" that there are antrums ; that men are in the habit of "*pacing*" rooms ; that a "*pedeluvia*" would be very "*objectionable*" in a case of influenza "*before depletion*;" that disease "*wears itself out*;" that a person ever "*had had*" his teeth "*put thoroughly in order*," when shortly after it was necessary to have operations performed to relieve a severe disease produced by the "*thorough order*" in which the teeth "*had had*" been "*put*;" that a tooth can *continue* to decay under a filling, (unless it is an amalgam one) which is "*carefully*" and properly inserted; and that an amalgam filling ever did or ever will permanently preserve a tooth; that any Dentist can be honest who will say that amalgam is better than gold, and who will fill teeth with it saying they could not be filled with gold, when such amalgam fillings have been taken out and the cavities beautifully refilled with gold by other Dentists.

